**Morning Praise @ Home 2nd April 2023**

**Palm Sunday**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Bible Readings Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 19 – 29** **Matthew 21: 1 – 11**

**Reflection from John**

**ONE OF THE CROWD**

Such a mixture of emotions

On Palm Sunday we begin a week which shows the extreme reactions to Jesus.

From crowds cheering him as King to others baying for his blood.

There are cheering crowds like when a favourite football team score a goal. There can be jeering crowds and there is also a “crowd mentality”.

One thing that is true from the very moment a crowd gathers is this: There are usually two sides in a crowd. For example, in a packed sports stadium for a sports match, there are those who are for one team, and those who are against. There are the cheerers and the jeerers, those who are for and those who are against.

The crowd that Jesus faced in those heady days when he entered into Jerusalem was both. It started off as a cheering and supportive crowd. And that’s the type of crowd Jesus meets today on our Palm Sunday.

But watch out Jesus! Because in a very few days, those same people are going to be a very different sort of a crowd for you! Some of those cheering ones in the crowd are very soon going to turn into jeering ones.

But in any crowd, then and now, you get two kinds of people. The believers – the cheerers, and the doubters – the jeerers.

For example: When Jesus healed the man born blind by making mud with dirt and spit and anointing his eyes with it some of the Pharisees believed it to be a great miracle. Some believed that indeed Jesus was the Messiah.

But many more did not believe. They questioned Jesus, they doubted those he had healed. They accused Jesus of not being who he was. So we have some for, the cheerers, and we have some against, the jeerers.

There was a big crowd in Jerusalem that day. Lots of people who didn’t even know who Jesus was – even though he’d been the talk of the city in recent weeks. It was at Passover time, when many Jews from the countryside would be there celebrating this special feast.

They were ready for a parade! They were ready to celebrate.

And Jesus, knowing the mood of the city just before Passover, knowing the prophecies concerning how the Messiah would enter Jerusalem and knowing what would come later, rides into the city on a donkey with his disciples beside him.

For those who have eyes to see it = his choice of animal. It tells you so much. Significant conquering heroes like generals and kings ride into town on horses. The Messiah comes in a more humble fashion on a donkey. Just as predicted by the prophets.

And on this Palm Sunday and in the crowd – “Hosanna” they shouted “Hosanna in the highest Heaven”. “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”.

The disciples must have thought they had it made. Success – at last! Where are those arrogant Pharisees now? We’ve got it made with Jesus! The people are all for him. They recognize that he is the promised one, the Son of David, everything is going to go our way.

But Jesus knew what was to come. He’d know even as the people shouted on Sunday – “Hosanna in the highest – hosanna to the Son of David – Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” He knew what was to come on the following Friday. He knew what the same crowd would shout out when Pilate asked them “What should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?”

He knew that they, the jeering crowd would shout out “Let him be crucified!” And that when Pilate asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” they would shout all the more, “Let him be crucified!” And Pilate would release Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he would be handed over to be crucified.

How quickly things can change. One week a hero, the next just another victim, a person, an object, to be spat upon and scorned to be beaten and killed.

And yet here we are today, the Sunday before that Friday. With our palm leaves and branches – singing praises to Jesus.

We cheer with the crowd that cheered for Jesus and rightly so, for Jesus deserves all our cheers.

But we have also cheered with a heart heavy with the knowledge of what is to come. And in that we are closer to Christ and his knowledge of the real situation than the disciples were.

Jesus knew who he was dying for, he knew that Judas would betray him, that Peter would deny him, that the disciples would abandon him and that the crowd would call for his death.

He knew what was to come – and yet he ate and drank with Judas. He knew and yet he prayed with Peter. He knew and yet he called all the disciples his friends. He knew and yet he taught in the marketplace and healed those who came to him.

We cheer and praise Jesus and call him Lord even knowing that we – like all the others – have failed him, and may yet still fail him.

We must cheer, and we must remember, we must remember that Jesus knows who we were, who we are, what we have done and will yet do and he still laid down his life for us.

How then will you respond to him this week above all weeks?

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

O Lord Jesus Christ, who on this day received the worship of those who hailed you as their King:
Accept our praise and adoration, our worship and love;
grant that we, who now confess you with our lips,
may never fail to give you the service of our lives,
for the honour of your holy name,
who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end. Amen.

Loving God,
you rode a donkey and came in peace,
humbled yourself and gave yourself for us.
We confess our lack of humility.
As you entered Jerusalem,
the crowds shouted, “Hosanna: Save us now!”
On Good Friday they shouted, “Crucify!”
We confess our praise is often empty.
We sing Hosanna but cry Crucify.
As the crowd laid their palms in front of you
you took the way of God: you took no glory for yourself.
We confess that we want to be accepted and take the easy way.
We do not stay true to your will.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us to follow in the way of obedience. Amen.

Lord Jesus, the crowd cut branches from the trees to celebrate the arrival of their king. May we daily celebrate your arrival and continued presence in every part of life. May we plant your standard in every place: every office, every home, every school, every relationship. Above all, we celebrate your arrival every day at the doorway of our lives. Come, Lord Jesus, and be our King.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Lord Jesus, the crowd spread their cloaks on the road before you. Help us to spread before you our cloaks of pride and self-sufficiency, the self-absorption that keeps us in a continual stand-off with your love and humility. Help us to take off our masks and silence our endless self-justification, so that we encounter you face to face, full of grace and truth.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Lord Jesus, it was on a donkey that you came, not a warhorse. In all our interactions with people this week may we demonstrate the humility of the man on the donkey and be committed to the well-being of family, friends and neighbours. So we pray now for those in our hearts who are facing particular challenges within their lives be it body, mind or spirit. (Take a pause to pray for someone known to you)

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

But, Lord Jesus, all is not well. We see kit in your eyes. This entry into Jerusalem is going to lead to disaster and we’re going to lose you. Truly there is no ‘good’ in ‘good-bye’. Comfort us with the truth this day; the truth that love is dangerous buy beyond price; the truth that our corkscrew hearts cannot be straightened without hurt, but they can be healed, and will be. We bring to you now our own particular pretences and avoidances, known only to us and to you.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us

always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**